

An Overview of 12 Years of Internationalization in the Algerian Higher Education

نظرة عامة على 12 سنة من تدويل التعليم العالي الجزائري.

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Abstract :

This paper attempts to shed light on the process of internationalization in higher education these last two decades. More specifically, it will offer an overview of the developments brought to the Higher education field since the independence time. The paper will detail with facts and data about the progress of the internationalization process at the Algerian university level. Overall, the researcher attempts to track the achievements and the shortcomings of the progress within a specific time frame.

Keywords : Algerian university, Higher Education, Integration, Internationalization, Strategies

ملخص :

يسلط هذا البحث الضوء على الخطوات التي خطتها الجزائر لتدويل قطاع التعليم العالي خلال العقدين المنصرمين. كما سيعطي نظرة شاملة على التطورات التي عاشها قطاع التعليم العالي وكذا الإصلاحات التي انتهجتها البلاد منذ الاستقلال الى يومنا هذا.

المقال سيشرح ايضا بالحقائق والتفاصيل تقدم عملية التدويل او العولمة على مستوى الجامعة الجزائرية. عموما، ستحاول الباحثة احصاء الانجازات وكذا النقائص التي تعنى بعملية التدويل وتقدمها في اطار زمني محدد.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الجامعة الجزائرية، التعليم العالي، الاندماج، العولمة/التدويل، الاستراتيجيات.

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INTRODUCTION:

The Algerian university has witnessed various changes throughout the decades since the independence phase. Many reforms were advised through time; however, Algeria with its latest attempts to catch up with the rest of the developed world has managed to lead a rather bumpy road towards the internationalization of its higher education system. The process is ongoing the last two decades and has yielded some achievements but also marked some shortcomings. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to detail the various changes undergone by the Algerian higher education and highlight how useful the internationalization has been to this sector. We attempt also to address the downside of the process and discuss the reasons behind the matter. Overall, the paper in itself is a record regarding the internationalization process that can be kept as a literature for further comparative researches and studies in this field.

2. History of the Algerian Higher Education:

Right after the Algerian independence from the French colonizer in 1962, Higher education became an aspiration for all the Algerians. During this crucial period after independence, more schools were set up and inherited content from the colonizer's system was still adapted. Afterwards, the seventies to the eighties era came to organize the education and training sectors in Algeria. Algerian students were set to have nine years of compulsory education under a system which emphasized mostly science and technology due to economic and social changes.

Starting from the 90's and in a changing globalized world that is becoming faster and governed by technology; Algerian universities have as a challenge the task of guaranteeing the right of access to higher education while maintaining high-quality training. Consequently, the mid 2000's period witnessed various reforms that touched the curriculum content, course structure, and pedagogy management areas. As a whole, higher education in Algeria gradually witnessed a considerable boost in what concerns students' population. For instance, the 2009-10, the country had 135 000 new high-school graduates and in 2016, students' population reached 1 600 000 (Overview of Higher Education -Algeria-,2018:01).

In addition, the Algerian higher education institutions are mostly public. The Article 43 bis1 of the amended and supplemented Law No 99-05 of 4 April 1999 establishing a framework law for higher education provides for the opening up of higher education to the private sector (Overview of Higher Education -Algeria- ,2018:03). Until this date, only a hotel and catering school is regarded as a private institution in Algeria.

3. Internationalization as a Process:

According to Knight and De Wit (1999:14), the process of globalization is seen as “the flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values, ideas ... across borders....The internationalization of higher education is one of the ways a country responds to the impact of globalization yet, at the same time respects the individuality of the nation”. Therefore, globalization can be regarded as the catalyst while internationalization is the response.

On the same line, Knight and De Wit (1999) propose another important definition for the term as being “a process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the institution” (p16). Consequently, internationalization of HE is seen as a dynamic process that emphasizes on the infusion of the international/cultural dimensions into the policies and practices of the academic institution.

Now if we talk about how to integrate the international dimension into a HE institution, we need to explain about the strategies that relate to academic as well as organizational policies and procedures. Namely, it relates to research, teaching and service. For this purpose, two different kinds of strategies come forward in this discussion: program (linked to teaching/learning and research/training..etc.) and organizational (infrastructure policies and regulations...etc) strategies.

3.1. Program Strategies

To understand more about program strategies we can say that the later are based on four main categories revolving around scholarly activities, academic programs, external relations and services as well as the extra-curricular activities.

The first category relates to scholarly and research collaboration. It is based on strategies that strengthens methodology, nature of research and distribution of knowledge. Whereas the academic strategies - which are of largest interest currently- focus on curriculum content and the teaching/learning processes.

Additionally, the external relations and services dimension is linked to the international and bilateral co-operation activities between institutions such as the development of alumni groups around the world. Finally, extracurricular activities help promote a comparative perspective to the classroom for home and foreign students.

The mentioned above categories can be better exemplified in the table below:

Table 1.Program strategies

Research and scholarly collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Area and theme centers - Joint research projects - International conferences and seminars - Published articles and papers - International research agreements - Researcher and graduate student exchange programs - International research partners in academic and other sectors - Link between research, curriculum and teaching
Academic programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student exchange programs - Foreign language study - Internationalized curricula - Area of thematic studies - Work/study abroad - International students - Teaching/learning process - Joint and double degree programs - Cross-cultural training - Faculty/staff mobility programs - Visiting lecturers and scholars - Link between academic programs and research, training and development assistance
External relations and services (domestic and abroad)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community-based partnerships and projects with non-government groups or private sector companies - International development assistance projects - Customized/contract training programs off-shore - Link between development projects and training activities with teaching and research - Community service and intercultural project work - Off-shore teaching sites and distance education

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Participation in international networks – Alumni development programs abroad
Extra-curricular activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Student clubs and associations – International and intercultural campus events – Liaison with community based cultural groups – Peer groups and programmes – Social, cultural and academic support systems

Source: Knight, J and De Wit, H. (1999:24)

3.2. Organizational strategies:

Such strategies make sure that the process of internalization of the academic institution is initiated through appropriate policies, administrative systems as well as human resources. Thus, the infusion of the international dimension into the institution happens through a clear statement of its mission, proper planning and reviewing of its procedures as well as hiring and promoting competent staff.

Table 2. Organizational strategies

Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Expressed commitment by senior leaders – Active involvement of faculty and staff – Articulated rationale and goals for internationalization – Recognition of an international dimension in mission statement and other policy documents
Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Integrated into institution-wide and department planning, budgeting and quality review systems – Appropriate organizational structures – Communication systems (formal and informal) for liaison and coordinator – Balance between centralized and decentralized promotion and management of internationalization – Adequate financial support and resource allocation systems
Support services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Support from institution-wide service units, i.e. student housing, registrariat, counselling, fund-raising, etc. – Involvement of academic support units i.e. language training, curriculum development, library – Student support services for international students studying on campus and domestic students going abroad, i.e. orientation programs, counselling, cross-cultural training, student advisors, etc.
Human resource development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Recruitment and selection procedures which reorganize international and intercultural expertise – Reward and promotion policies to reinforce faculty and staff contribution to internationalization – Faculty and staff professional development activities – Support for international assignments and sabbaticals

Source: Knight, J and De Wit, H. (1999:26)

As shown in the table above, the organizational strategies have been summed up in four main categories: governance; operations; support systems; and human resource

development. Mainly, governance covers areas where faculty, staff and leaders are committed to the institution's mission and recognize the international perspective of it. Then, operations make sure that proper planning and financial support are given to various systems to ensure the internationalization objectives are met. Support services involve channels that offer help, counselling and advice to home and foreign students. Last, the development of human resource relates to the hiring, promotion and support of employees within the institution.

4. Internationalization of HE: The Algerian Case:

4.1. Overview of the Algerian Higher Education System:

The shape of Higher education nowadays in Algeria is organized into three levels: Bachelor's degree, Master's degree and Doctorate typically called (LMD). Framework Law No 08-06 of 23 February 2008 on higher education enshrines these three higher education qualifications, except in medicine, where teaching will continue to follow the traditional model (Overview of Higher Education (Algeria) ,2018:02). This new reform that came in the 2004-05 academic year seeks to adapt teaching programs through cross-curricular teaching involving technology, history, science, foreign languages and methodology. Implementing such a system implies teachers working the content of their modules. Hence, teachers will make sure that students are competent in various areas through providing multidisciplinary units, practical tasks, projects and real life situations' simulation all together within semester-based format.

The application of LMD in Algeria is considered as a step towards Globalization and the aim behind this change was to create an overall innovation within the Algerian university. Mainly, the LMD system is structured as follows (Lahmer, 2012:39)

- 1- **Semester System Year:** For a better organization and more flexibility in the system, the division is based on semesters rather than years of formation.
- 2- **Teaching Units:** Three main teaching units make up the skeleton of the whole system comprising: a fundamental unit, a methodological unit, an introductory teaching unit and finally a cross-disciplinary teaching unit.
- 3- **Credits:** Each teaching unit corresponds to a number of credits that can be capitalized and transferred, the total number of credits for each semester is equal to 300 (180 in the licence and 120 in the master degree).
- 4- **Domains:** They cover many coherent disciplines including other subjects that lead to other specialities. After the progressive acquisition of the identified competences, students will be oriented to another function according to their final research project ie academic or professional. Hence, students will benefit from the mobility they gain to other institutions and countries even.
- 5- **Tutoring:** This is a new pedagogical activity for the teacher introduced in the LMD system, this element permits a direct relation between the teacher and the student outside the academic sessions i.e. the teacher-learner interaction becomes easier and closer.
- 6- **Progressive Orientation:** There is a great tendency to orient the students progressively towards other specialities .The more they progress the more they are oriented towards new disciplines and it depends on their outcomes. Hence, the student's competence is what determines his orientation during the formation period.

Overall, the LMD system is a flexible one that also permits students to move from one discipline to another through the transfer of their credits. The question

whether this positive feature about the system is properly applicable in Algeria is still questionable

4.2. The Algerian Case:

As a whole, the process of internationalization of HE in North Africa can be regarded as a long and rather troubled history at various levels. However, it is very important to see such process as a modern way to cope up with the human, social, cultural and economic development of nations. Hence, the international dimension of education provides multiple opportunities and potential benefits for individuals, institutions and society in general.

The change required to internationalize the HE system is said to be slow due to the number of employees, students and even parents who are crucial elements in it (Ginsberg & Plank, 1995). The outcomes of such change can only be assessed after one or two generations.

In the Algerian context, one of the first hints of change occurring in the HE strategies is the mushrooming of private universities which until now is very slow. Mostly all HE institutions are state-controlled.

When it comes to the academic program strategies adopted in Algeria, the curriculum as per the LMD system adapts students to university life and offers them a chance to experiment with multiple training offers regardless of their future field of specialization. The LMD system deepens the students' basic knowledge in their earlier years and then gradually shifts the focus to their chosen subject.

Furthermore, students have at least one session of foreign language learning (French, English, German, Spanish) a week depending on students' choice and regardless of the field of their specialization. Research laboratories, journals as well as national and international academic manifestations are witnessing an increase as a way to encourage ongoing research inside and out of each university.

Regarding mobility, Algeria has made international university partnerships to back up its academic reforms. Through these partnerships, vocational training opportunities are offered to deepen the LMD system and adjust programs. According to the (2018) European Commission's overview of the higher education system (Erasmus+) in Algeria, There are currently more than 10000 foreign nationals from 61 countries studying in Algeria (p 25).

In addition, Algerian universities offer annual training opportunities for excellent students at Master and Doctorate levels to seek research collaboration opportunities abroad. It also offers annual training chances for all academics to make progress in their doctoral research or improve the teaching quality of their classrooms. As per the European Commission's report of (2018), 4200 grants were offered to teachers finalizing their doctoral theses (18 months grant) and 1500 grants for leading students of at Master and Doctorate levels (p26).

Algerian universities seek support regarding the post-graduate studies as well as the improvement of the teaching quality. Therefore, around 1500 bilateral agreements were made in the few years back in order to establish high-level scientific networks and develop joint research projects with foreign universities. Additionally, Algerian higher education and scientific research ministry sought to modernize education, strengthen institutions' management and expand offers for qualifications through multilateral cooperation with countries of the European Union. Among such cooperation programs are:

- The Erasmus Plus program (formerly 'Tempus');

- The Erasmus Mundus program;
- The 'Horizon 2020' program, following on from the '7th RTD Framework Program';
- The Higher Education Reform Support Program ('PAPS-ESRS').

Such cooperation programs join together efforts of students and academics from different countries in order to achieve common scientific goals and make progress in the field of scientific research.

CONCLUSION :

After more than twelve years of implementation of the LMD reform in Algerian higher education and with efforts from authorities to focus on the international dimension of it. The process is proving to mark considerable development and growth in the sense explained earlier. Such progress is marked by the availability of mobility programs as well as the yearly granted chances for training chances for both academics and students. However, the road is still bumpy as evaluation reports in the past twelve years or so reflected an image of an unstable internationalization process in Algeria.

What needs to be stated is that the conditions for the internationalization process in Algeria to prosper are not yet favorable. In order for this country to reach where other foreign and even Arabic countries are standing there needs to be genuine implementation of change, innovation and there needs to be more encouragement in investing and innovating when it comes to facilities, tools and resources. The Algerian Higher Education possesses a great capital which is the human aspect that needs to be backed up by quality tools and proper planning and management. At last the process of internationalization would require more effort and seriousness in implementation of its various practices at all levels in order to ensure its efficiency.

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